It is a typical evening in Bedrock. Fred and Wilma Flintstone, after a dinner of brontosaurus cutlets, settle down to watch their favorite TV show, *Mesmo the Hypnotist,* with their neighbors Barney and Betty Rubble.

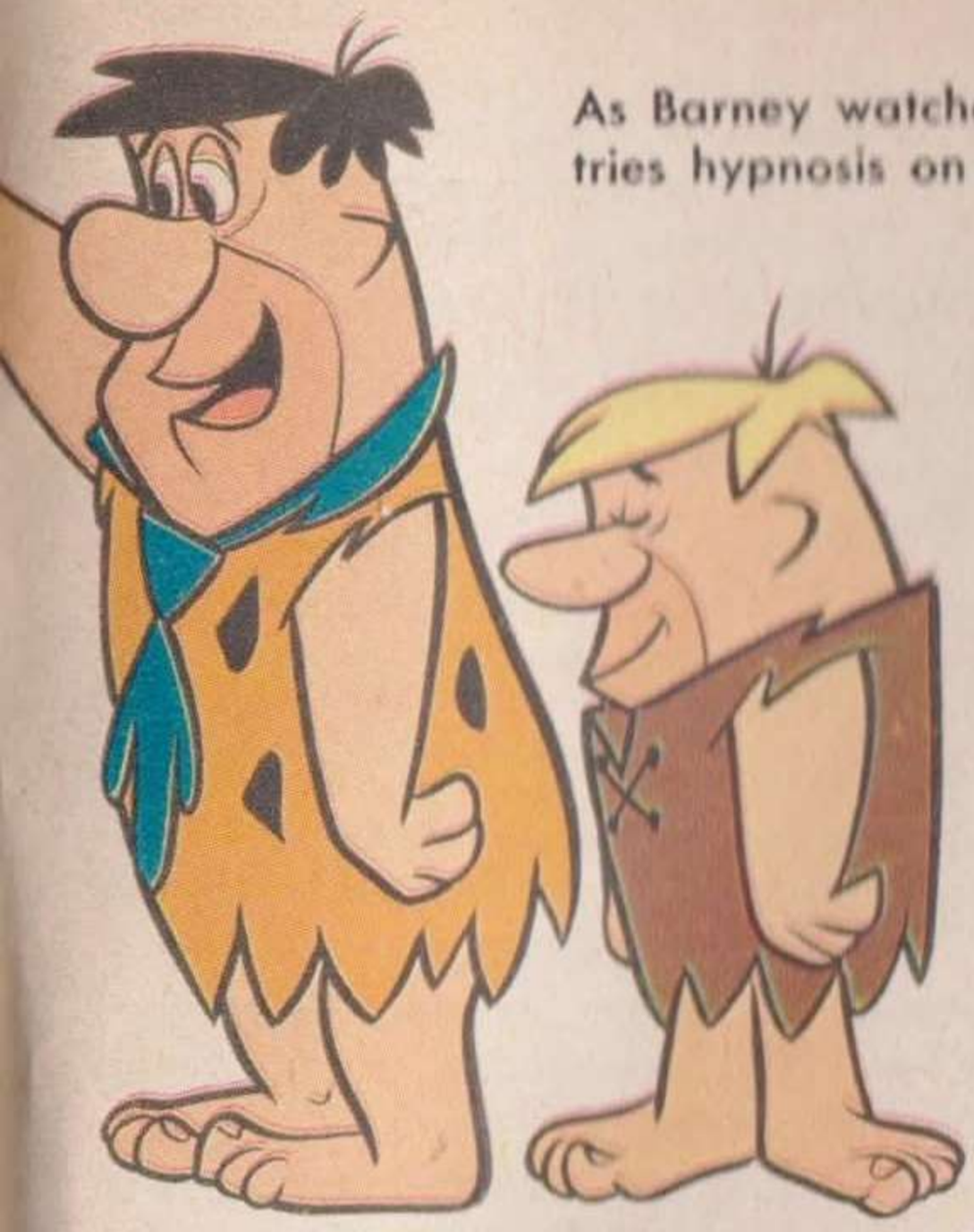
Fred, a dinosaur operator at the local rock quarry, is boastful, ambitious and not too bright (something like Jackie Gleason in *The Honeymooners*). After Mesmo shows how easy it is, Fred announces that he will now try hypnotizing Wilma.

But it doesn't work. Wilma, who is shapely, caustic and always right (something like Riley's wife in *The Life of Riley*), lets Betty Rubble

The Flintstones voices: Bea Benaderet, Jean Vander Pyl, Alan Reed and Mel Blanc.

know with a wink that she is only pretending to bark like a dog under Fred's "hypnosis."

There is one interesting side effect, however. Neighbor Barney Rubble, who is impressionable, loyal and stupid (something like Art Carney in *The Honeymooners*), falls under Fred's spell just watching him. Barney begins to bark and to ***continued***

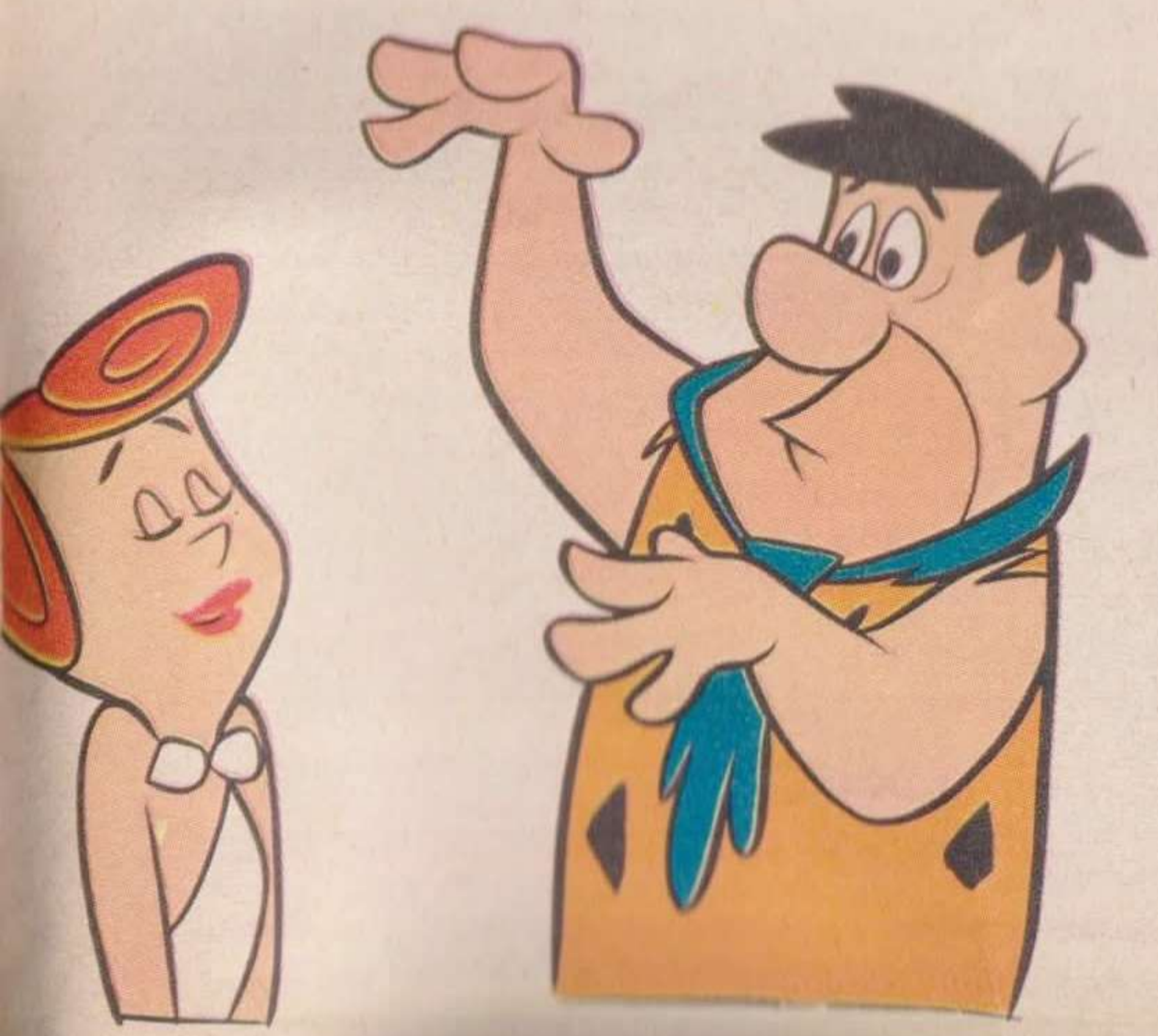


As Barney watches, Fred tries hypnosis on Wilma.

The creators of 'Huckleberry Hound'

have come up with a cartoon series for grownups

The Flintstones'



Fred orders Wilma to behave like a dog (left), but Barney begins to bark and scratch (above).

scratch at fleas, and Fred, unable to bring him out of it, does the next best thing. He backs his stone-wheeled convertible with the palm-thatched top out of the carport and takes poor Barney to the veterinarian.

These developments introduce one of the situations in ABC's new half-hour situation-comedy series that seems a cinch to divide viewers almost equally between amusement and exasperation. It is called *The Flintstones* and is loaded with a highly controversial ingredient—whimsey. *The Flintstones*, an animated cartoon, differs from all the other typical-couple-and-the-couple-next-door shows that have preceded it on TV only in its execution and in its Stone Age setting.

Bedrock, the county seat of Cobblestone County, has a population of only 2500 and is 250 feet below sea level. The cave in which Fred and Wilma entertain their neighbors, the Rubbles, is split-level. Yawning and scratching in his bearskin on his patio of a Sunday morning, Fred is knocked flat by a delivery of the Bedrock Daily Slate, a newspaper chiseled into a stone slab. Wilma plays a Stoneway piano; Barney makes a bowling date (the bowling balls are, of course, made of stone) by calling Fred on a ram's-horn telephone; Betty much admires Wilma's new vacuum sweeper, a baby mastodon on rollers with a powerful trunk.

The Flintstones is the fourth animated-cartoon series created for TV by William Hanna and Joe Barbera, who began in 1957 with *Ruff and Reddy* (until recently an NBC Saturday morning show), followed up in 1958 with the syndicated *Huckleberry Hound* and last season introduced *Quick Draw McGraw*, also syndicated.

Barbera says *The Flintstones* came into existence after a survey showed 65 percent of the *Huckleberry* and *Quick Draw* fans were adults. "We wanted to satirize suburbanites for nighttime TV," Barbera says, "but nothing we drew in a modern setting was funny. Finally we put our little man into a convertible with fins fashioned out of tree trunks and a thatched roof for a top. Looking at it, we all broke up, and the situation we were groping for was as simple as that—cave people from the Stone Age who think, talk and act modern."

The question is whether *The Flintstones* is also Stone Age TV. The voices of Alan Reed (Fred) and Mel Blanc (Barney) are uncannily reminiscent of Jackie Gleason's and Art Carney's in *The Honeymooners*, and if this disturbs viewers or the sponsors, Barbera, who supervises all recording, can chalk up a $15,000 mistake. That's what it cost him to junk the sound tracks of the first five episodes because he was dissatisfied with Fred's and Barney's voices (now Reed's and Blanc's). Jean Vander Pyl (Wilma) and Bea Benaderet (Betty) survived the shuffle in the recording booth. The antics of the characters they play are not much different from those of all the wives of all the neighbors in all of TV's live-action situation comedies.

In fact, a member of the press may have summed up, in a memo to his home office, what viewers may expect. "This," he observed, "is radio all over again—with animation."—*Bob Johnson*

Product of United States Tobacco Company